

# **Asbury United Methodist Church Council**

## **Minutes of February 24, 2022 Meeting**

**7:30 PM via Zoom**

**In Attendance:** Pastor Jen Karsner, Dan Haas, Anne Haas, Nancy Cody, Nancy Beers, Jackie Britton, Corinne Van Hoven, Alberta Stornetta, Natasha Flannigan, Roxanne Kuhn, and Scott Karsner.

**Pastor Jen opened the meeting in prayer.**

### **Minutes**

We approved the minutes from the January 27, 2022 meeting.

### **Pastor Report**

Jen informed us that a charge conference would not be required for the pastor salary for 2022. The current salary was approved at the charge conference in September 2021 and the January 2022 bonus does not require approval since it is not considered as compensation for pension purposes. We will need a charge conference if we make mid-year salary increases in July.

### **Lindsay Betz Request for Financial Support**

At the request of the Council, Lindsay Betz attended the meeting to provide details about her request for financial support for her work at Baptist Campus Ministry at the Naval Academy and answer questions. After discussion we decided to make a one-time donation of \$250.

### **Trustees**

- Dan gave an update on the Eagle Scout Project to redo the grill area, replace bushes and add benches. Jack Hogsten, whose house backs up to the area, gave his OK for the project.
- Dan gave an update on projects including A/C in the Sanctuary, the replacement of outdoor lights with LED lights, and wiring issue in the parsonage.
- Dan reported that the scouts are looking at the mowing schedule, Jeff Burkhart is looking at scheduling a spring cleanup, and Kurt Kuhn is looking into the feasibility of removing the race restrictive covenants from the church deed.

### **Finance Report**

Nancy reported that for January we had an operating shortfall of \$8,500 vs a projected operating shortfall of \$5,400. Giving was short of budget by \$5,000. With the pandemic and many members still

attending online, giving is not as “regular” as in the past for members who give by check. She feels most of the shortfall will be made up as checks are mailed in.

Nancy reported on the sharp increase in the BGE bill due in February and the need to take a look at the preschool reimbursement for their share of building expenses. In 2021, we had adjusted the preschool reimbursement for building expenses downward from \$2,300 a month to \$1,826 to reflect reduced building usage and they have continued to pay that rate in 2022 although they are back operating a full program. (**Update:** Beginning with the February payment, the preschool will increase their payment to \$2,300 per month.) Skip Trimble is looking at our accounts to see if he can suggest any changes to reduce our cost.

### **SPRC**

- SPRC will be meeting with Kris Neale, church member candidate for ordination, in March.
- SPRC needs to fill some committee openings.
- SPRC is working on the admin position with the possibility of converting Cindy to an employee.
- Nancy Cody asked for approval for an \$900 increase in the Pastor’s Expense Reimbursement budget for 2022 (from \$4,100 to \$5,000) since expenses of \$900 relating to 2021 were not paid until 2022. (In 2021, \$3,200 of the \$4,100 budget was unspent.) **The Council approved the increase.**

### **Youth Ministry**

- Due to insufficient sign ups from other churches Refuge Youth Retreat has been reimaged for 2022 to be Refuge: Asbury Edition where we will host our main speaker [Rev. Stephen Scovell](#) and features God's Garage Band providing music. Our group currently has 10 youth, 4 adult leaders, and our speaker.
- Our February service project has in collaboration with the Worship Committee and Rev. Jen and we are creating Shrove Tuesday "pancake in a mug" Kits for Asbury's March 1 zoom dinner/service. My hope is that members of the Church Council will join in the fun on Zoom from 6-7 PM to have dinner and a short family friendly service together.
- Anti-Racist Church - Working in collaboration with Be the Bridge leaders and Church Council we've been working on the Historic Statement and Anti-Racist Value Statement for almost 1 year now, soliciting feedback in spring 2021. Church Council has now approved it and the rollout is occurring now. We will have a video that will be part of the Feb 27th worship formally announcing we are vowing to be an Anti-Racist Church. As well as additional videos to put out on Social media.

- Reconciling Community - We are continuing to establish ourselves in the community. We're now listed on Annapolis Pride's website as a spiritual community resource for youth. The Leadership Team is investigating additional ways to continue this work in our local community.
- Summer 2022 – Considering a mid-week gathering, perhaps playing pickup outdoor basketball games. Goal is to be create space for area middle and high school youth where we can build some relationships.

## **Preschool**

Registration is going well. They are about one-half full with 3 of the classes completely full. Natasha is happy with the numbers.

## **Masking Requirement**

In light of the public schools lifting the mandatory masking requirement and the preschool's receipt of letters from parents asking about Asbury's policy, we decided to revisit our policy. After much discussion, we voted to lift the mask mandate for our buildings and ministries. Effective March 1, 2022, masking will be optional for all, regardless of age or vaccination status. We strongly encourage everyone to follow the CDC and Anne Arundel County Health Department guidelines which recommend that those who are unvaccinated or have special health concerns mask while at in-door gatherings. The leadership of each group or ministry may discern that masking is the best way to meet the needs of their group.

Many factors were considered in making this decision. The COVID metrics in our state and county have all significantly decreased from the Omicron surge and continue on a downward trend. The community transmission is currently as low as it was in August of 2021. Additionally, making masks optional is largely consistent with the practices of our community. Many places – restaurants, stores, concert venues, etc. – have made masks optional. Last week, Anne Arundel County Public Schools made masks optional in their buildings. This move was prompted by the county reaching an 80% vaccination rate of those eligible. However, the vaccination rate for 5-year-olds – 12-year-olds is very low at 8%. Yet the public schools still made masks optional in all buildings, including elementary schools. Additionally, the growing volume of data continues to indicate that young children who contract COVID-19 tend to have mild cases and an extremely low risk of bad outcomes.

## **Anti-Racist Statement**

Pastor Jen will announce it in worship in February 27 and will read the statement and share a video about why it is important. The statement will be included on the web site and the statement and the historical reflection will be mailed to all members. Jen will consider a service of lament in the future.

Rev. Jen updated the Council about her meeting with the Be the Bridge leadership, their discussion about the Service of Lament, and the possibility of a historic plaque. The original idea was to incorporate the changing of the deed with the service. As noted earlier tonight, the Trustees are working on the feasibility of changing the deed. One thought for the Service of Lament was to print the existing deed on a sheet of dissolvable paper and to dissolve it during the service to signify this is no longer what we are

doing. It was noted that this act could lead to people acting as if the things that needed correcting never existed in the first place. Then this got the group thinking of other ways Asbury can acknowledge our historic racism and we discussed the possibility of a historic plaque. The rationale behind a historical plaque is an acknowledgement to the community about our history and it might prompt the community to wonder about their own organizations histories. The plaque could also be a reminder to the Asbury congregation as to why this work is important, being placed where the congregation sees it on a regular basis. Rev. Jen asked for the Council to think about this; the details about a historical plaque would still need to be worked out and Council can discuss the idea more at a subsequent meeting.

### **Afghanistan Refugee Family – Partnership with Gloria Dei and Other Churches**

Jackie reported that the family has not yet been assigned. Many of the families are being housed in hotels near BWI. There is an upcoming meeting at St. Johns.

### **Next Meeting**

March 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Scott Karsner closed us in prayer and the meeting adjourned at 9:50 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Cody